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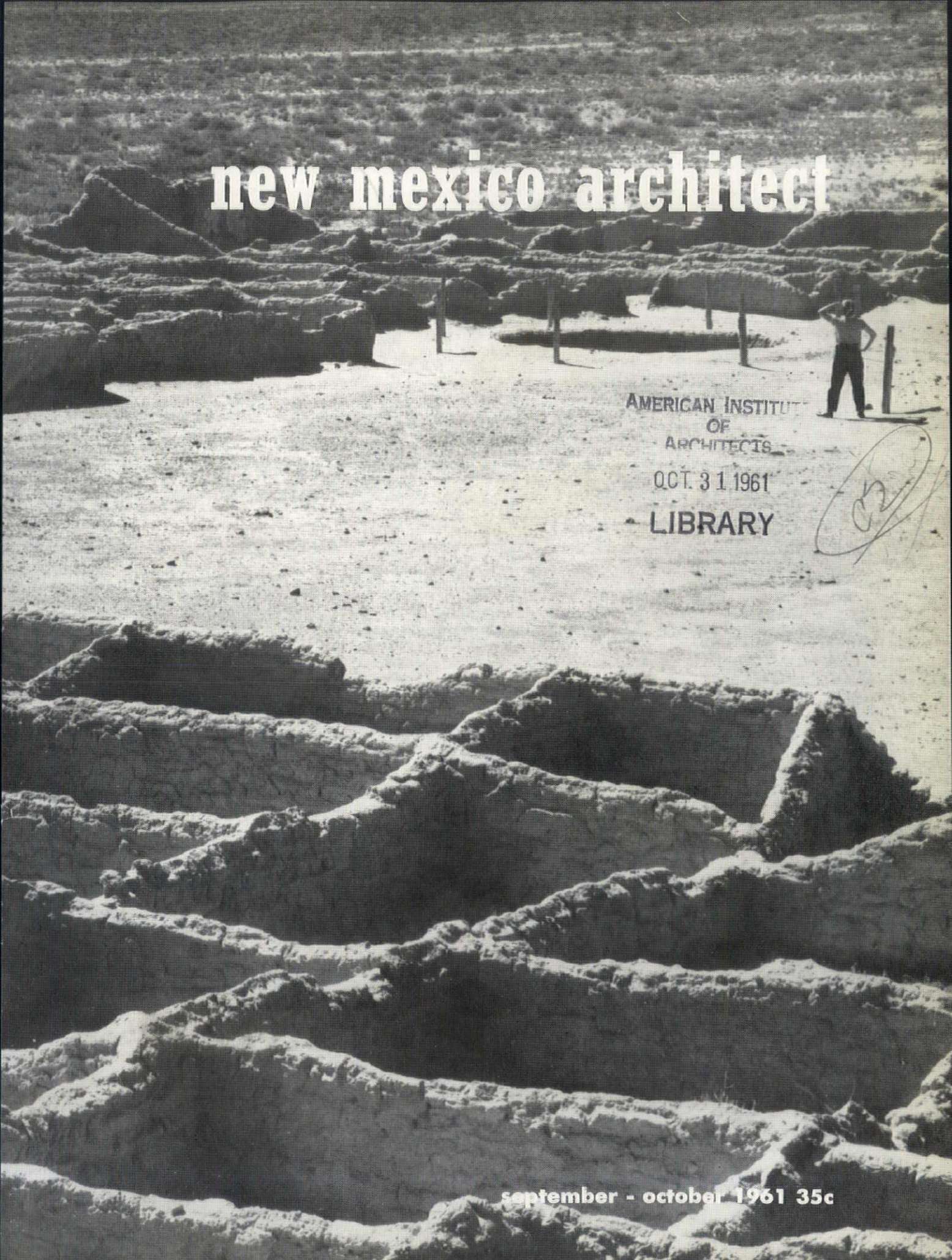

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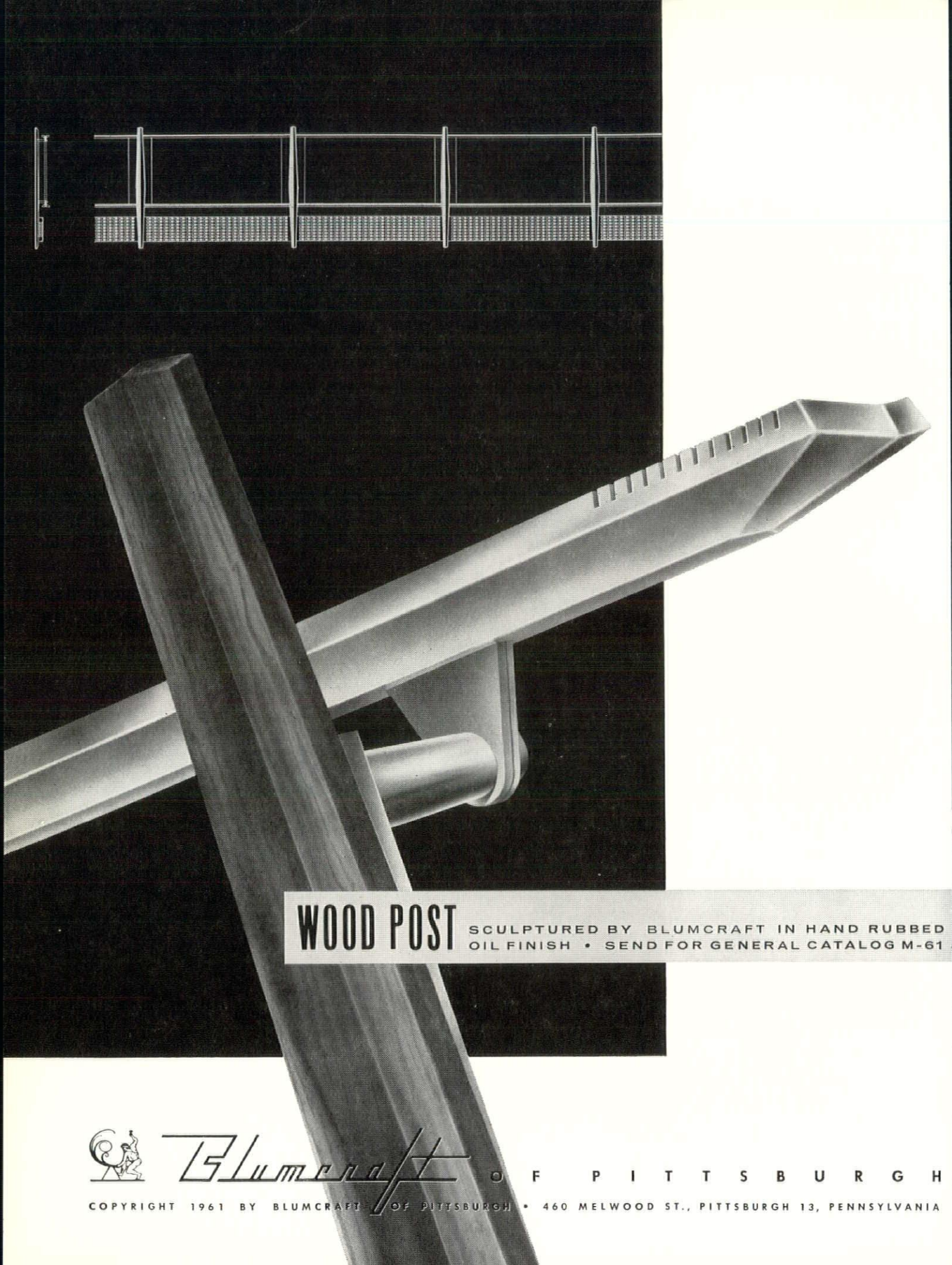
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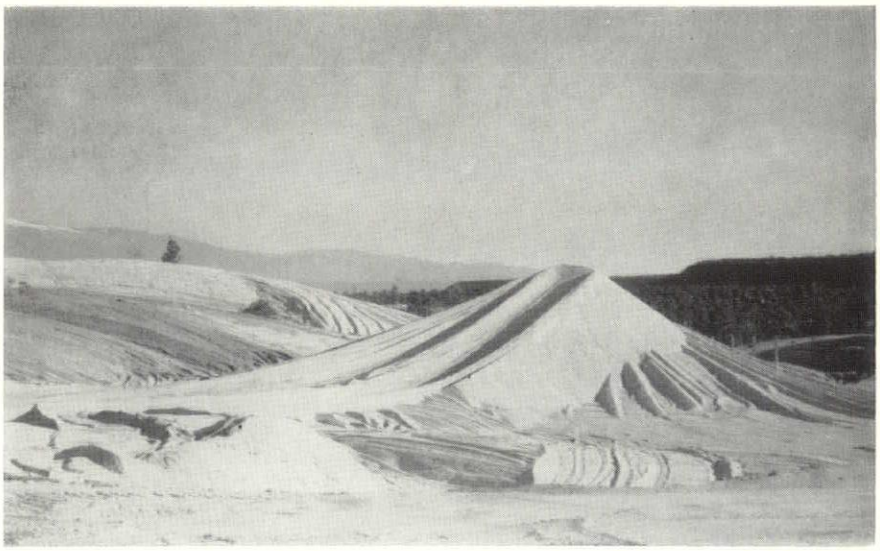

NOTES AND NEWS

The Tenth Annual Conference of the Western Mountain District of the AIA will be held in Reno, Nevada on September 21, 22, 23. The theme of the conference is "Public Agencies in Community Development: The Politics of Architecture." Speakers for the meetings include: Henry L. Wright, vice-president, AIA; architect Donald Rhea, Allan Temko, architectural critic; Eugene Burdick, political scientist, University of California.

Concrete dome. Numerous spectators were on hand during the last days of July to witness the raising of the precast, 450 ton concrete dome at the new Grant School, near Los Altos park in Albuquerque. The folded plate dome of 93 foot diameter but only 4 to 8 inches thick was cast on the ground early in the summer. Twelve powerful jacks were needed to raise the dome to a height of nine feet, but the movement was so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. This was the first use of the lift-slab process in this area in the erection of a concrete dome. Movies of the operation were made by the Portland Cement Association.

The Grant school, a combination junior high and elementary school designed by Flatow, Moore, Bryan and Fairburn, is being built at the economical figure of $9.34 a square foot. Structural engineering for the building was done by Robert D. Krause; mechanical consultants Bridgers and Paxton; electrical consultant Uhl and Lopez. General contractor for the project is K. L. House. The sift-slab contractor was Vagtborg Lift-Slab Corp. of Los Angeles.

John P. Conron, chairman of the Santa Fe division of the New Mexico AIA, has been appointed by Mayor Leo Murphy of Santa Fe to the Sister City Committee: Town Affiliation Program of the American Municipal Association. This Town Affiliation Program seeks to bring together the peoples of two cities in different parts of the world for an exchange of cultural insights. Over 100 U.S. cities have already undertaken such programs. Santa Fe has not yet chosen her sister city but is interested in the general area of South America.

Urban C. Weidner, AIA has been appointed by Mayor Murphy of Santa Fe to the Municipal Housing Code Committee to develop a housing code for the city of Santa Fe.

Don P. Schlegel, chairman of the Albuquerque division of the state AIA, is serving as chairman of the committee to revise the building code of Bernalillo county.

Monarch Tile Mfg., Inc., a long time advertiser in the NMA and well-known producer and distributor of tile in the Southwest, has expanded its organization with the addition of three new offices: a Division Office in Denver with Mr. Jack Thompkins as manager, a Northwest Texas Division Office in Midland with Mr. Tom Ward as manager, and the appointment of an architectural consultant, Mr. George Petty, to the Western Division in Phoenix. Headquarters of Monarch Tile are in San Angelo, Texas. Southwest Ceramic Distributors, 2500 South Second, are Albuquerque representatives of Monarch Tile.

Arkla Air Conditioning Co., of Little Rock, Ark., sometime advertisers in the NMA, have announced an across-the-board reduction of $100 on all of its residential central cooling-heating units. This reduction makes the Sun Valley gas air conditioning prices 27% less than they were in 1957.

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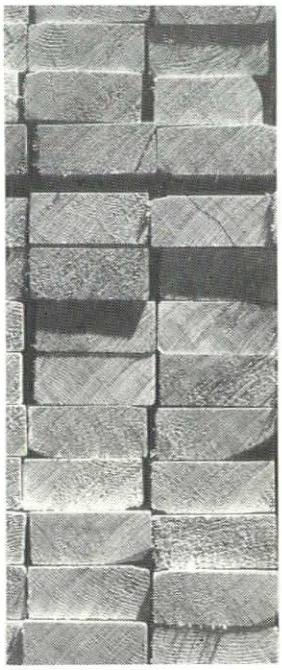

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Student fellowships. This past summer the Fort Burgwin Research Center, Pot Creek, N. M., gave fellowships to two University of New Mexico students to measure buildings of historic and architectural interest in the vicinity of Taos, N. M. Recipients of the fellowships were William Sims, fourth year architectural student, and Miss Lee Booth, third year art student. They worked under the direction of George C. Pearl and Bainbridge Bunting in consultation with Fred Wendorf and Herbert Dick, Directors of Fort Burgwin. Five houses and an abandoned Penitente *morada* were measured and drawn. Reaction to the splendid work of these students was so enthuiastic that there is a strong possibility that the Foundation will publish the drawings this winter.

BOUQUETS TO THE NMA

Dear Mr. Brittelle:

Permit me to compliment the New Mexico Chapter, American Institute of Architects, on your excellent magazine, the "New Mexico Architect."

No special issue is in mind as they are uniformly good. It is a neat, well arranged, professional appearing publication, a top notch job.

E. A. Roberts, Executive Secretary
N. M. Soc. Professional Engineers

Dear Mr. Bunting:

Several of the architects who make up the editorial board of Northwest Architect read with interest the story entitled "Responsibility of Architect to Owners" by Harry M. Prince in the July-August issue of your magazine. We would like to reprint it in our next issue.

Fred Miller, Jr., Editorial Production
Northwest Architect Published by
Minnesota Society of Architects.

Dear Bainbridge Bunting:

Since somebody must be thanked for the May-June 1961 "New Mexico Architect" — it might as well be you, especially because of the fine article "El Zaguan." Your photo and Bartlett Gilbert's drawings are very good indeed.

Earl H. Reed, F.A.I.A. Chairman,
Committee on Preservation
of Historic Buildings, A.I.A.

Dear Mr. Bunting:

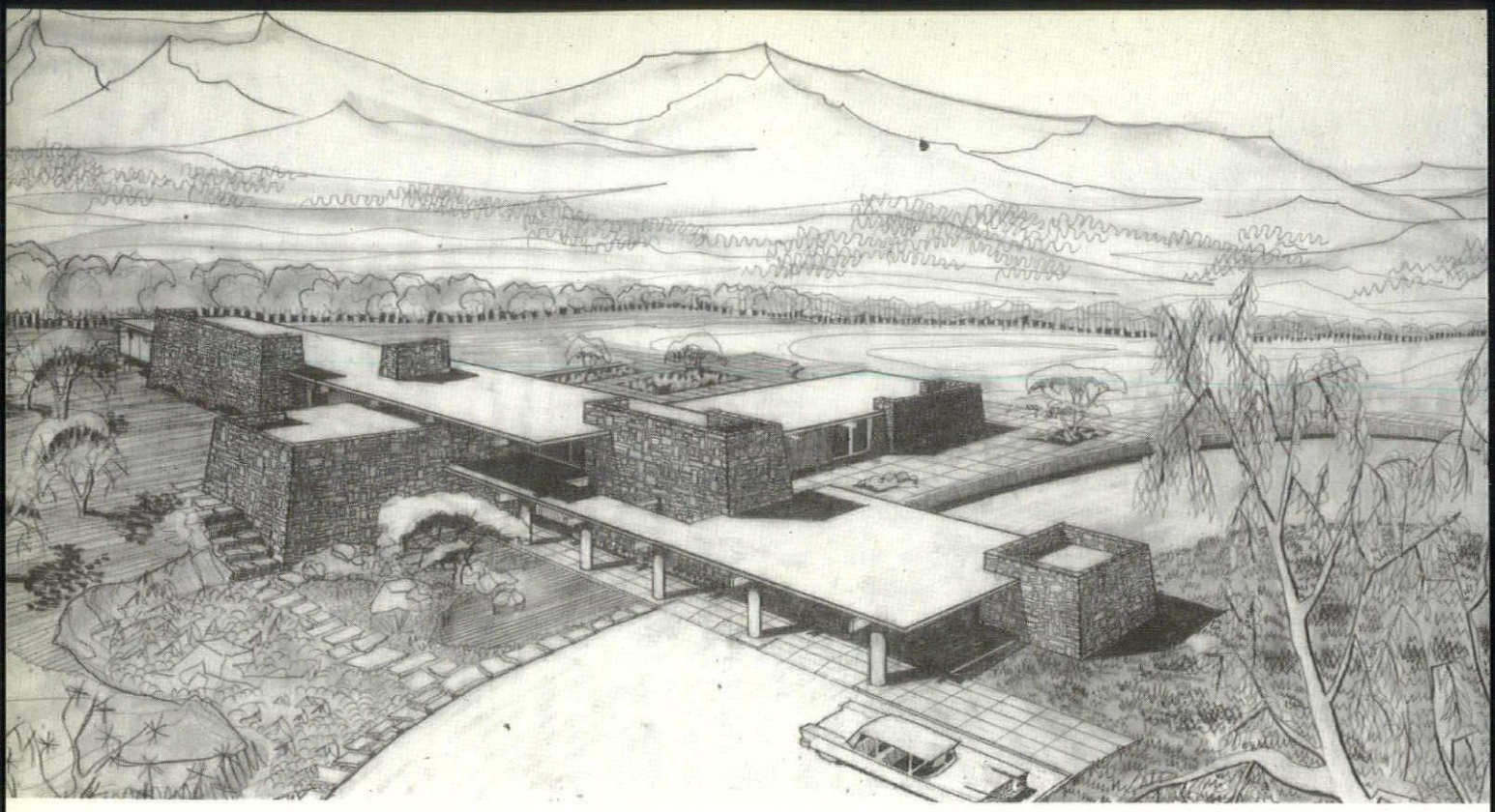
I have been reading with interest for some time now your fine publication and wish to commend you on its development.

I find Mr. Plettenberg's article "And the Front Yard is in the Back" in the July-August '61 issue to be particularly appropriate, well written and thought provoking.

Congratulations and good luck.

Roy M. Pooley, A.I.A., Jacksonville, Fla.

The editors are very appreciative of these letters which indicate that at least a few people read our bimonthly compilations.



Residence for
MR. and MRS. JOHN D. ROBB, JR.
Don P. Schlegel, AIA., Architect

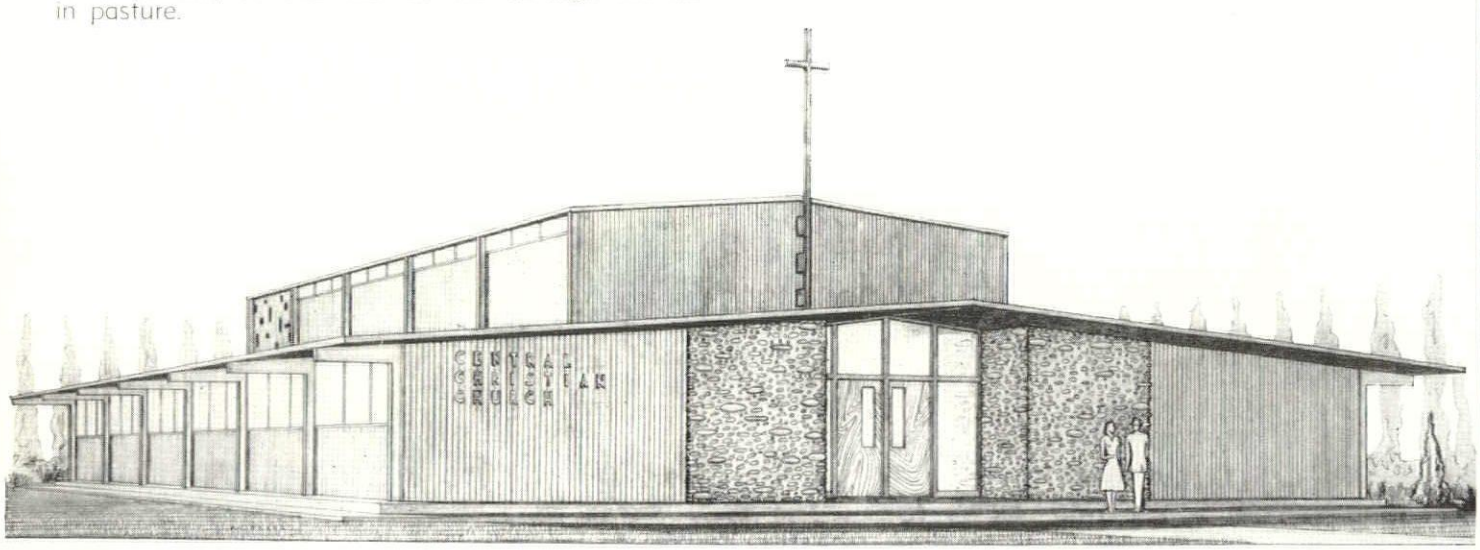
This commodious residence has been designed for a large family on a ten acre tract in the North Valley area of Albuquerque. The plan establishes four distinct zones: a bedroom wing, a kitchen-family activity area, a living-music-dining section, and a large studio. One requirement of the clients was that each room have a good view of the mountains.

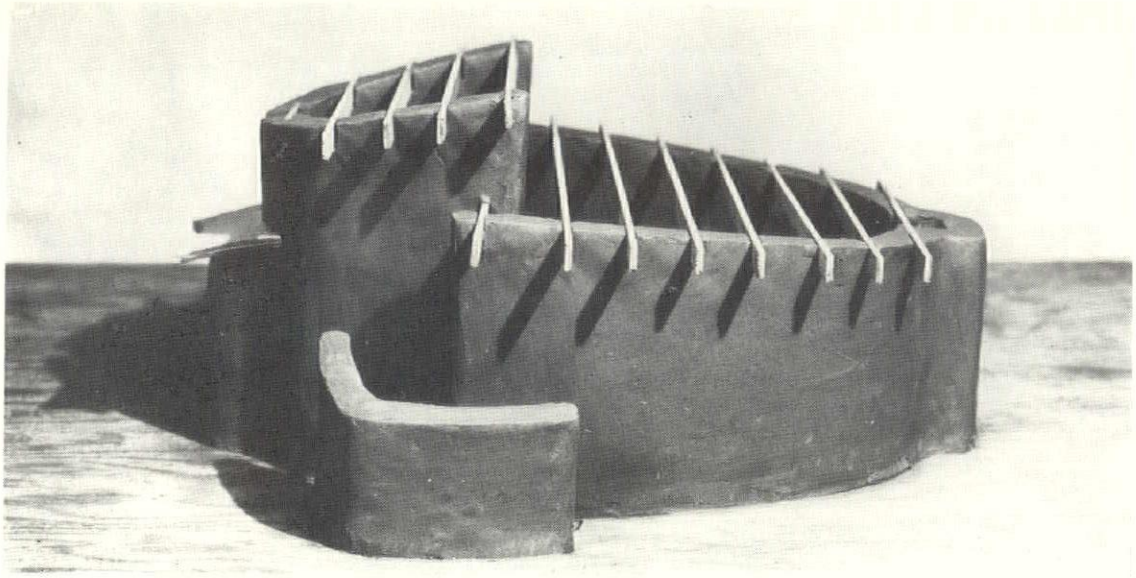
The design represents an attempt to evolve an appropriate regional architecture for the Southwest through theory rather than merely by using traditional materials. Hence the blocky pylons of masonry, the high ceilings and a massing which closes off the southwesterly winds. Materials are red sandstone and stained wood; brick will be used for the floors. A natural terrace upon which a part of the house will be built is to be landscaped. The rest of the acreage will be in pasture.

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Albuquerque, N. M.
Arthur W. Dekker, AIA., Architect

This sketch shows the first building phase of a much larger church which will be built at Aztec and Amherst streets, NE., Albuquerque. This design provides for the needs of a new but growing congregation which requires present quarters that can later be incorporated into a larger church. The building represented contains the temporary sanctuary seating 250, which can also be utilized as a social area, kitchen, church offices and class room space — comprising some 5,600 square feet. The master plan will convert this present sanctuary into a Fellowship Hall and additional class rooms when the large 700 seat sanctuary is built.

Construction is wood with river stone accents; the roof covering is 4 inch tongue and groove decking Construction began late last December.





A CHURCH FOR SANTA FE

Mark Heyman

A study of New Mexico's outstanding architecture of the past leads me to conclude that our regional tradition may be defined by these three precepts: • Use the most appropriate materials available • • Employ these materials according to contemporary technology • • • Design for the local climate and contemporary life.

For the 20th century, what architecture would conform to our regional tradition? This design for a small church for Santa Fe is an attempt to answer this question.—*Mark Heyman.*

walls — adobe of varying thickness, depending on height; plastered with adobe outside, textured white plaster inside. Highest wall is 32 feet.
roof — wood decking on laminated wood beams; roof overhangs approximately 3 feet.
natural lighting — 24' x 5' clerestory to the East, three narrow stained glass apertures to the West, and a series of small circular skylights to wash light down rear walls. Foyers have floor-to-ceiling glass openings to East and West.

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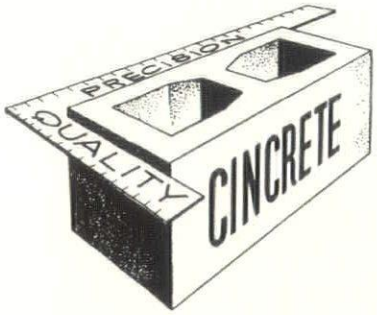

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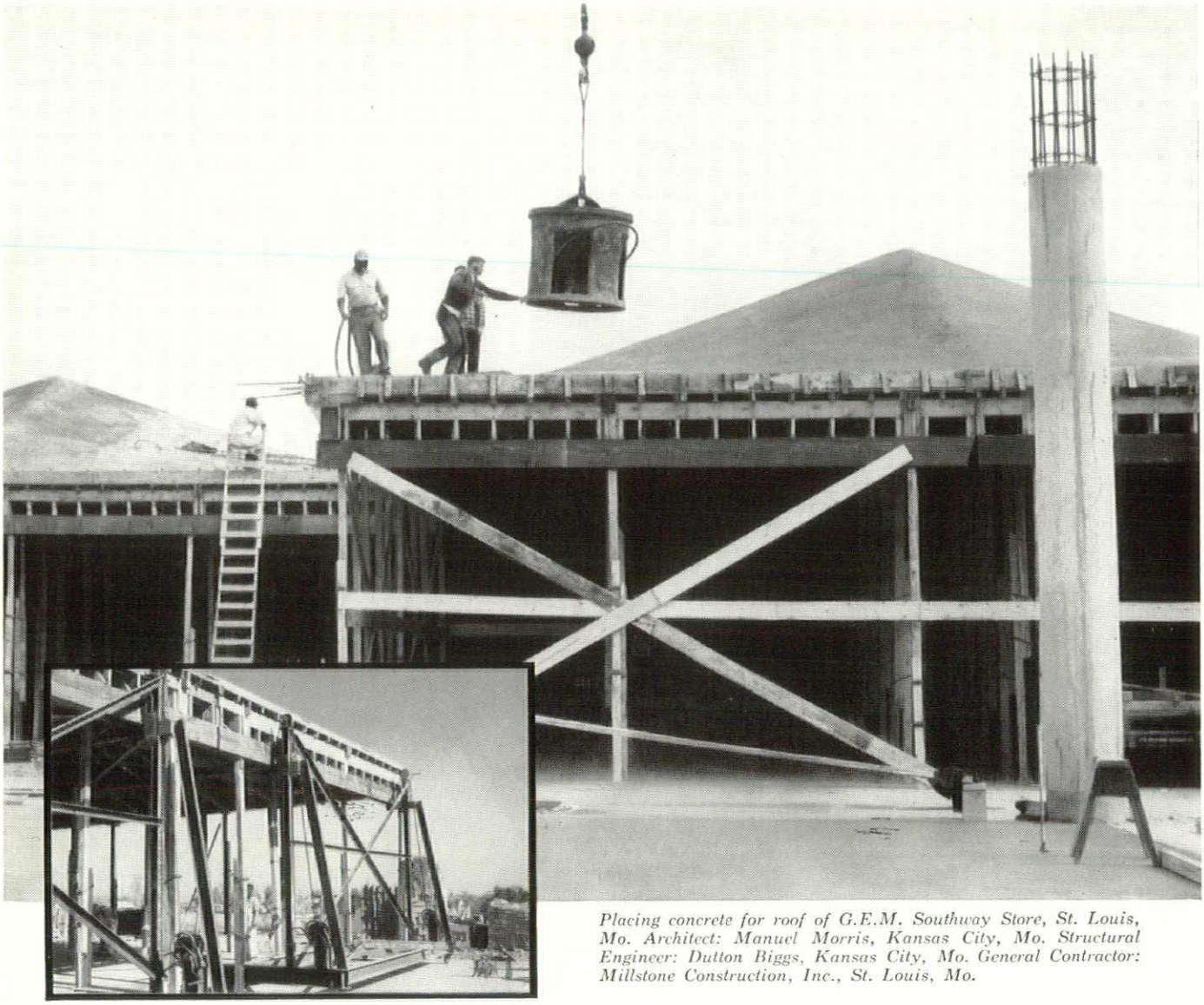

Placing concrete for roof of G.E.M. Southway Store, St. Louis, Mo. Architect: Manuel Morris, Kansas City, Mo. Structural Engineer: Dutton Biggs, Kansas City, Mo. General Contractor: Millstone Construction, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.

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The roof is composed of 50 reinforced concrete hyperbolic paraboloids. Each of these umbrella-shaped shells is supported by a 24-inch diameter concrete column. Through the efficient re-use of only 5 sets of forms, sizable savings in both time and labor were effected. All 50 shells, each 47½ ft. square and 2½ inches thick, were completed within 6 weeks.

Construction of the hyperbolic paraboloids was done in rows. Thus, masonry, plastering and other trades began work as soon as a row was completed.

This is another good example of the way improved techniques have made shell roof designs economically practical for structures of all types and sizes. No wonder structurally strong concrete is the choice of more and more engineers and builders! Write for technical facts. (Free in U.S. and Canada only.)

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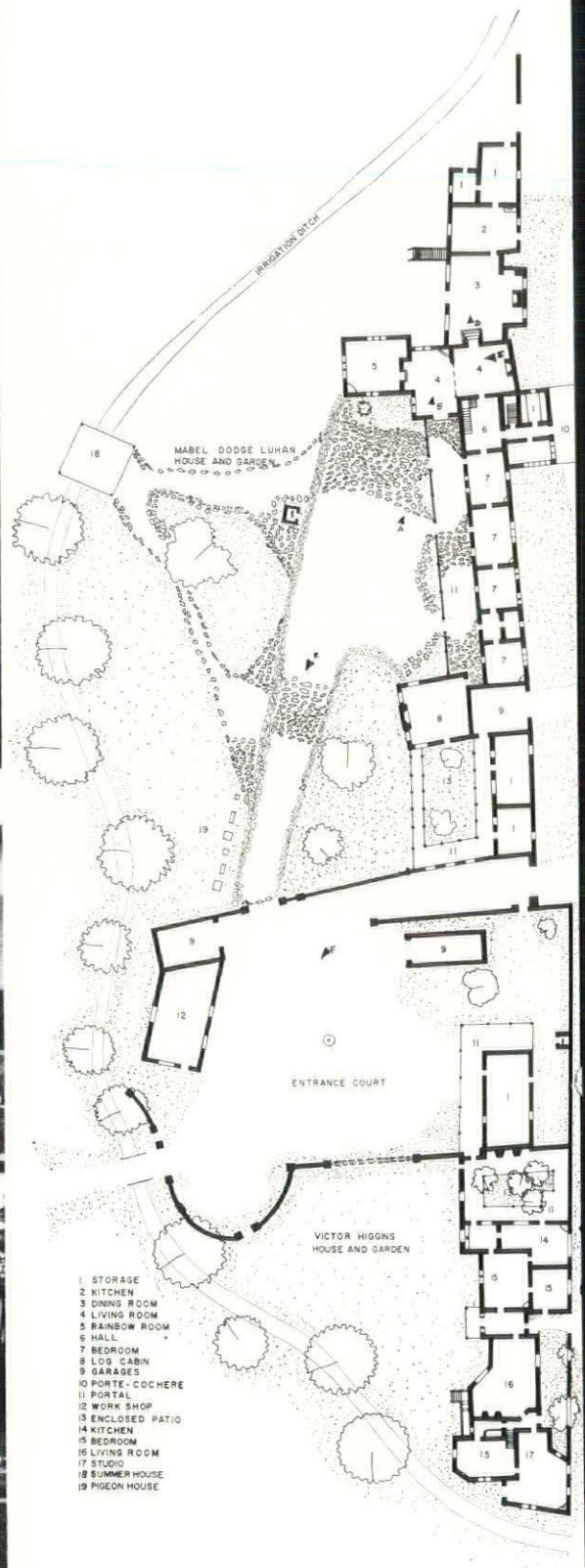
Residence of

Mable Dodge Luhan

Taos, New Mexico

One of the most famous domiciles in all of New Mexico is the rambling, hospitable and thoroughly engaging house that Mabel Dodge Luhan designed and had built over a fifteen year period in Taos. Beginning in 1922 with a simple New Mexico farmhouse of four rooms, the structure grew over the years to a complex structure 450 feet in length, strung out along the bank of an irrigation ditch and organized around a magnificent entrance court. Although designed as a unit, the main group comprises two separate residences, the smaller of which, to the south, was later bought by the Taos artist Victor Higgins. Actually Mrs. Luhan's building activities did not stop here but continued with five other smaller houses (not illustrated here) distributed around a low-lying *ejido* or common meadow.

C



Photographs — Bainbridge Bunting
Photographic prints — Mary Utsinger
Sketch plan — Bartlett Gilbert

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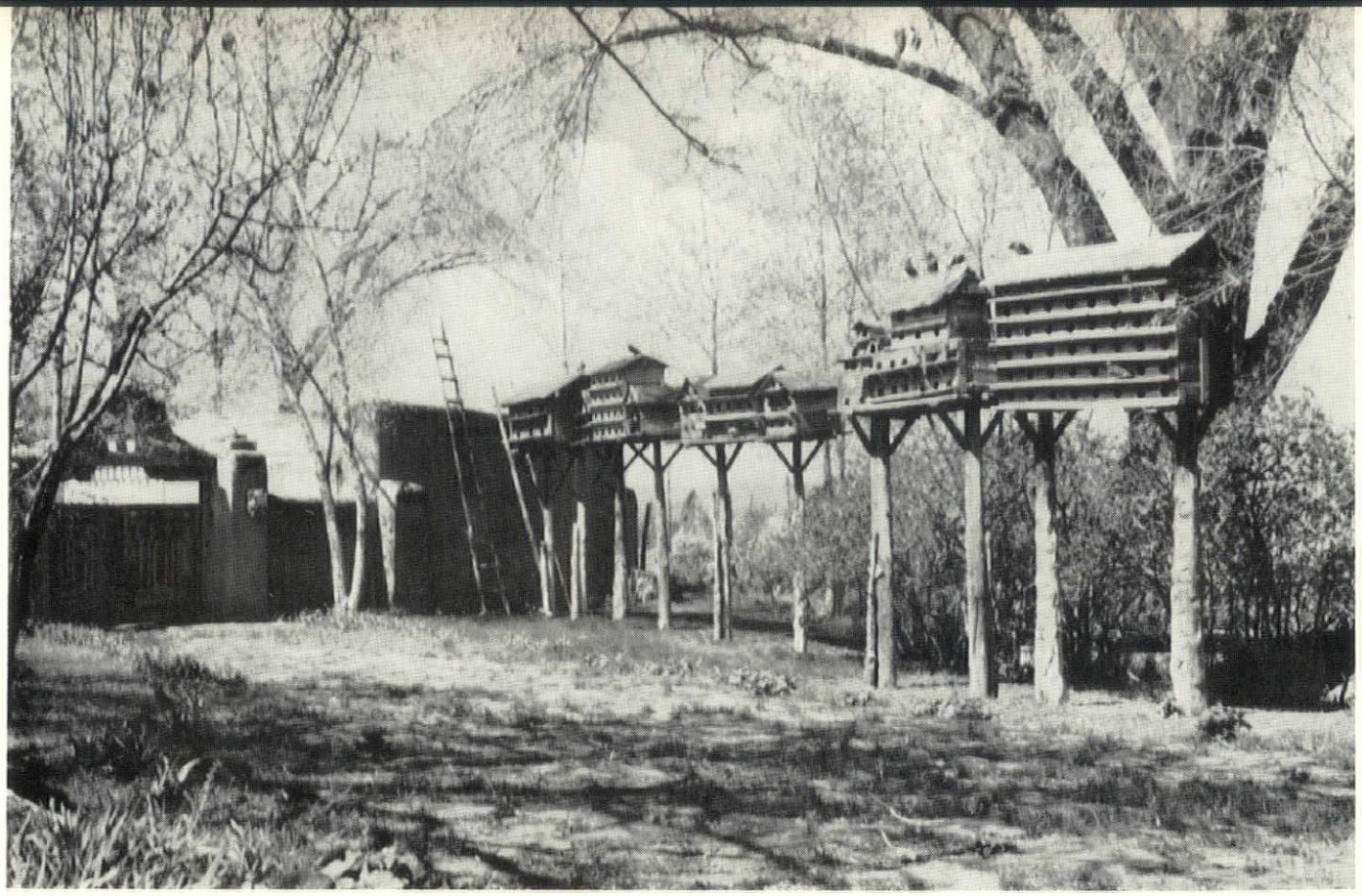

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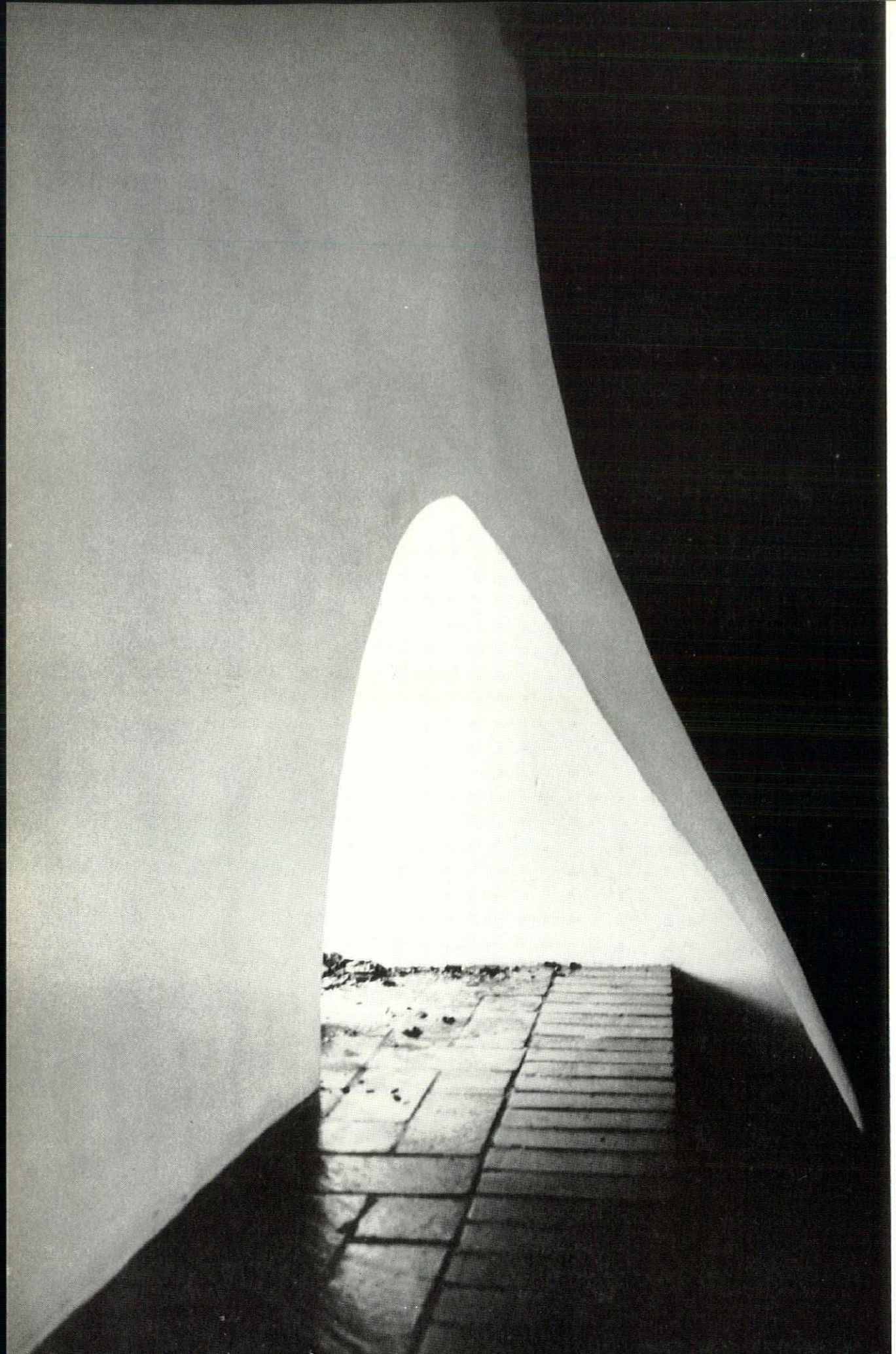
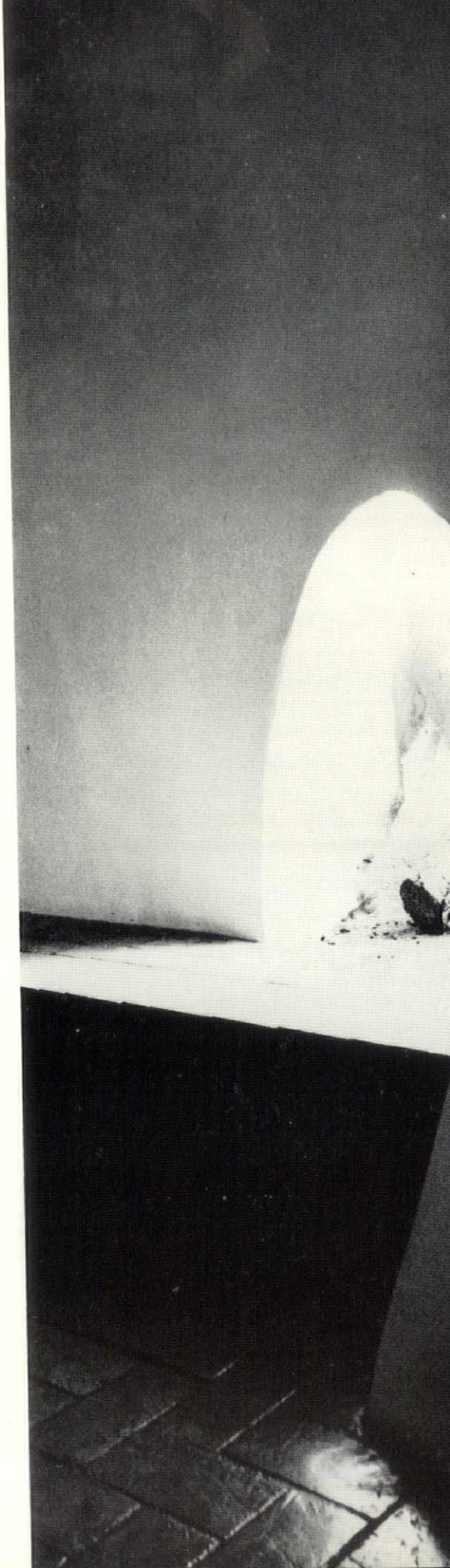
The work of an amateur architect, which results inevitably in certain makeshifts, the design is still of extraordinary interest. Bits from old New Mexico houses or elements brought from Old Mexico or Europe are incorporated into this adobe structure alongside the simplest of stock mill work or new doors carved by New Mexican craftsmen. The design likewise fuses elements derived from Pueblo and Spanish Colonial architecture or gently recalls Tuscan villas such as the one Mrs. Luhan restored prior to World War I. Yet the extraordinary thing is the way in which these disparate elements and inspirations have been fused into a harmonious design by the builder. The relation of house and gardens is also effectively handled. Mrs. Luhan's architectural work is deserving of a serious study.—*Bainbridge Bunting*

F



Left and right. Dining room fireplace in residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Sanders, Tome, New Mexico.

photographs by Lee Marmon



COMMODITY, FIRMNESS, and MUD*

some personal observations on building with adobe.

George Clayton Pearl

Adobe is soft, imprecise, and soluble in water. It is strong in compression, weak in tension, and enormously heavy. It costs less than any other material of which a man can build a house, and it is available in abundance wherever there is a patch of the earth's surface which has not yet been covered with bituminous paving. Adobe is the most humble of all materials, yet the primeval symbols of its dignity and its responsiveness to the will of the artificer are the muddy hands of Jehovah building Adam out of wet dust.

* *The Vitruvian trinity of "commodity, firmness, and delight" has been used as the text of many recent architectural sermons. The element of delight in particular has been preached from some of our best pulpits by grim-faced architectural priests.*

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By adobe I mean sun-baked rectangular blocks of earth, containing clay as an adhesive, sand as a stabilizer, and straw as a binder and curing agent. There are three marginal materials which I will mention in order to make it clear that they are not included in my use of the word adobe.

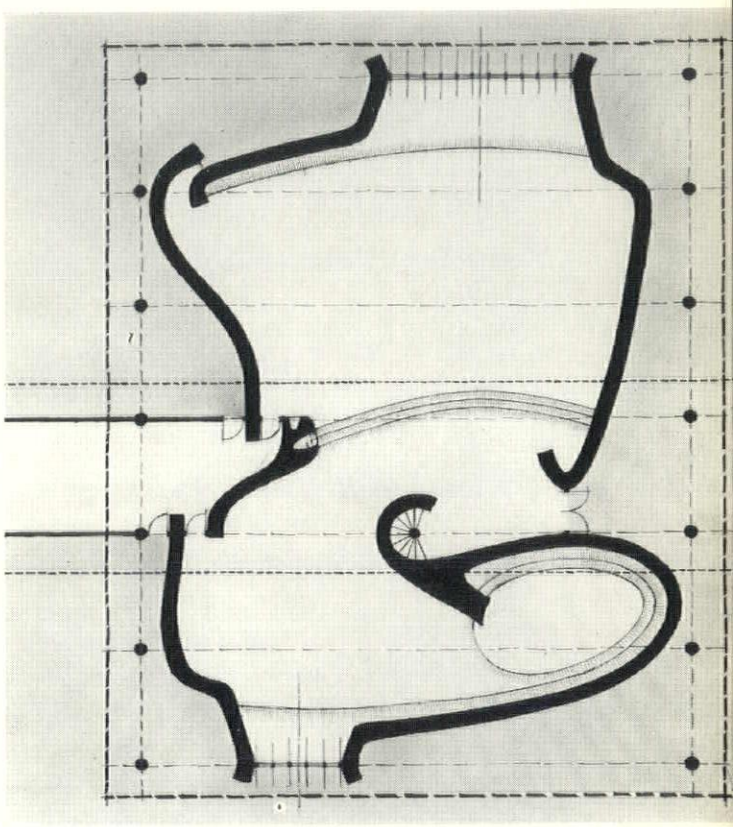
Terrones are trapezoidal blocks cut with a square ended shovel directly from the marsh-grass swamps along the Rio Grande. The main roots of the grass run through the center of the block, making a dense horizontal mat. Because of this mat of roots the block is spongy, very difficult to break or carve, and even when unplastered will hold together for decades of rain and wind. As far as I know, **terrones** are used only in the middle Rio Grande valley, with the most concentrated use being in the Ysleta area.

Fired adobe is an often used term—a curious designation since a fired block of earth is a brick and not an adobe at all. I have seen many of these adobe sized, low-fired brick. They have a good color and an appealingly peasant appearance. I would like to work with them if they were locally available, but as far as I know they are made only in Tucson, southern California, and northern Chihuahua. Since we are so remote from the source of supply, transportation costs make the material quite expensive here — it seems a lot to pay for such self-conscious humility. I think of fired adobe as being a first-rate material in Tucson but a suspect material here. How secondary the objective characteristics of a material or a form become when compared to our subjective perception of them.

Stabilized adobe, adobe made moisture-resistant by the admixture of a petroleum by-product, is, I believe, available locally. Walls built of this material do not have to be plastered, so it is used by people who would like adobe if it were not dissolvable in water. I do not react very kindly to the people who would like me if I were something which I am not, and I surmise that the adobe block would react in the way, had it the consciousness which I attribute to it. Apart from this, however, this stabilized block has the same appearance as the common variety, and so has characteristics which are not visually expressed. I feel the same objection to stabilized adobe as I do to reinforced concrete in tension and steel beams incased in wood.

My first adobe walls were as straight and uniform as I could build them, both vertically and horizontally. But the voice of the material said, "You are misusing me. You would like for me to be something which I am not." So I abandoned, one by one, the batter boards, the lines, and the masons levels. After all, if I preferred straightness and uniformity, I was free to work with concrete block or brick.

I had misjudged the permanence of the form of the individual block. The block's breaking in my hands under its own weight should have been a clue to its fugitive and transitional form. The practice of casting adobe in rectangular block is only one of many methods of achieving the essential goal of getting uniformly mixed and compacted earth into the form of a wall. Most pre-Spanish adobe builders in the Southwest used the turtleback process in which basketfulls of wet mud were dumped on the top of the wall and allowed to harden before the next course was dumped on. Wood formboards have also been much used, both for the casting in place of adobe mud and for compacting in place of moist adobe or rammed earth. But these processes are



When adobe walls are relieved of their roof-supporting duties, as in the above plan study of the La Jolla Hunt Club, La Jolla, New Mexico, they are free to take self-supporting shapes which are derived from the plasticity and massiveness of the material.

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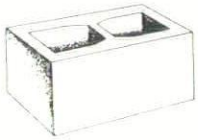

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At right and below: the new exclusive Continental Airlines terminal, Phoenix, built in 30 days!

Architect, William A. Lockard, AIA

When **Continental Airlines** was awarded service into Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport in April of this year, a terminal became an urgent necessity. Plans and cost estimates were offered for approval and final working drawings completed by William A. Lockard the same month. On May 1, The Banes Company broke ground for the 40 x 60 **Butler System building.** On May 31, final interior touch up was finished, and the building accepted by a pleased airline management — ten days ahead of its deadline!

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Study model of fireplace for Mr. and Mrs. Dick Kirschner, Placitas, New Mexico. The fireplace is only an incidental source of heat—we are more concerned with its visual aspects. Playing with the light from the fire give range to the plasticity of the adobe.

not much used because they are more complex and less responsive to the demands of a specific problem.

As the forms which the material sought became more plastic, I at first cast the units in the shape which the pre-conceived form demanded, much as Keresan women cast special shapes for corner fireplaces. Later I abandoned this practice in favor of sawing or chopping the standard block into the required shape before placing it in the wall. Both these processes now seem to me to be illogically indirect and sure preventatives of unified and spontaneous form.

After the blocks have been laid in the wall in a thick mortar bed, a point is reached where some moisture has been lost and that which remains is evenly distributed through both block and joint, causing the entire mass to be homogenious. At this point it becomes apparent that the form of the block is transitional only, and need have no more effect upon the overall form than the coils of clay have upon the finished pueblo pot.

At this stage of curing the material is splendidly responsive to the blow of an axe or the stroke of an abrader. The material invites carving, with the same challenge and promise of delight as a white sheet of illustration board invites the stroke of a sable brush. And so long as one is delighted to be working in adobe rather than in some other material, a wide range of expression is possible — not expression of self, but of material and function.

The material likes compression and the curving line; it resists both precision of line and precision of stress. Thus, adobe forms are massive, unstrained, and

bounded by lines of erratic local variation. Here is one basis for a distinction between "folk" form and "sophisticated" form. In steel and concrete we work at the limits of the material's strength — our design formulae are so oriented. In adobe and other peasant materials we work toward the center of the material's characteristics and astutely avoid the limits. We do only those things with the material which it can sustain with comfort for generations. Like mercy, the quality of adobe construction is not strained.

The compression, the plastic line, and the local variation dictate the arch. Of all structural forms the arch is the most explicit and the most serene. The arch is a stress diagram of itself. The adobe arch is not the precise geometric symbol of Rome and the Renaissance, but the arch which is specific, unique, and uncopyable. It is not only uncopyable, but it is also undescribable in the documents of a present-day construction contract.

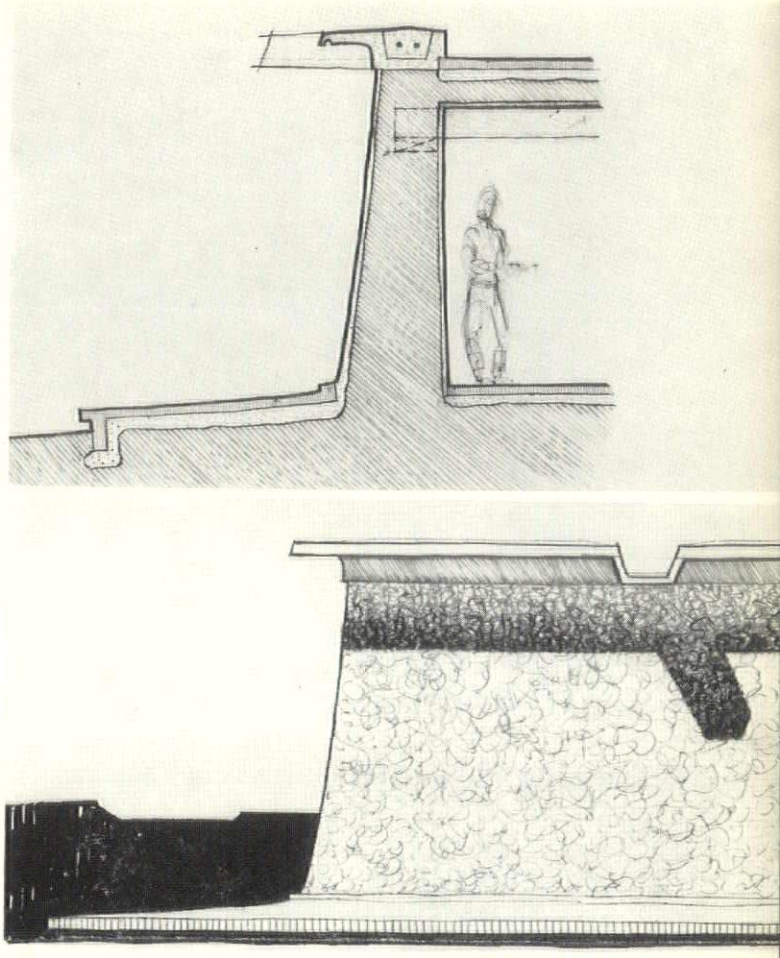
Not the arch, only, but all of the adobe forms which I have found most expressive of the material cannot be handled by our present architectural procedures. First of all, they cannot be drawn. Even if if they could be adequately described by architectural drawings and specifications, their cost could not be accurately estimated. And even if they could be drawn and a price agreed upon, the most essential point would still be missed — the element of spontaneity which can come only from the craftsman's participation in the immediate situation. The *designer*, as he typically functions today, can hardly supply this immediacy because of his distance from the actual construction. It is very difficult for a designer to enter into the excitement of a form which is not going to exist until months after his drawings are completed and which will be built of materials which his hands will never touch. We often compensate ourselves for this remoteness by doing spontaneous drawings. We feel an excitement and satisfaction in the drawings and not in the form which it describes.

The craftsman who constructs the form can hardly become involved in it in any sense which is valuable either to himself or to the form. The decisions have all been made months ago by the designer. The constructor's function is entirely mechanical, and a machine cannot participate. When men are used as machines, they are misused. Men make poor machines.

Perhaps this is in part what happened to our late lamented craftsmanship. When we lost the limitations of a virile tradition, everything had to be described precisely; and the craftsman became a machine, hence a poor craftsman. To be sure, this is only part of the story. The primary reason for a decline in craftsmanship is a decline in our concern for it. But the loss of the possibility of participating in the work as a man has probably damaged craftsmanship more than have the ever-more-limited budgets.

I am not talking about self-expression. I do not believe that architecture is a proper medium for self-expression. Something very close to the opposite of self-expression is required I think, both in that part of the design which is determined by the designer and that part of the design which is more logically determined by the craftsman. A variety of overcoming of self is required of the artificer who achieves clarity of expression of function and materials, uncorrupted by self.

In much of the work which I have done in adobe I have used no drawings at all. This is in part because of this element of immediate, on-the-spot evolution which cannot be adequately predicted. Also, it is partly



Elevation and section of load-bearing adobe wall. The adobe roof fill is protected by brick paving. The wall is protected by a precast concrete coping which acts as form for reinforced concrete bond beam, and by pebble-dash stucco. The base of the wall and the earth beneath the wall are protected by a brick pedestal-walk. In some soil conditions a concrete footing beneath the massive wall would not be required.

a reaction against our usual office procedures which lend themselves readily to machine materials, processes and forms, but which balk when confronted with the handicrafts. How much, I wonder, of our insistence upon machine materials and forms and our disapproval of hand work and ornament stems from philosophy and how much stems from what is easy to handle by current contractual procedures. I have often watched with envy the sculptor, painter, and potter who derive form directly from material, using only their hands or simple tools which are understood so well that they are like extensions of the hand.

To those of my friends, and others, who will cry "escapism" and "reaction" I quickly say that I am not advocating the use of adobe in public buildings. I am not, in fact, advocating anything. I have only meant to describe the delight which I have found in becoming intimately acquainted with this oldest of all building materials, and as a part of the same experience, in rediscovering the human hand as the most sensitive of all building tools. I have lost none of my concern for the expression of our own time, but I know of nothing which has made either adobe or the human hand obsolete.—*George Clayton Pearl*

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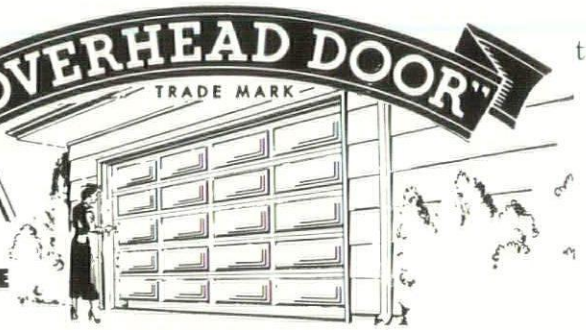

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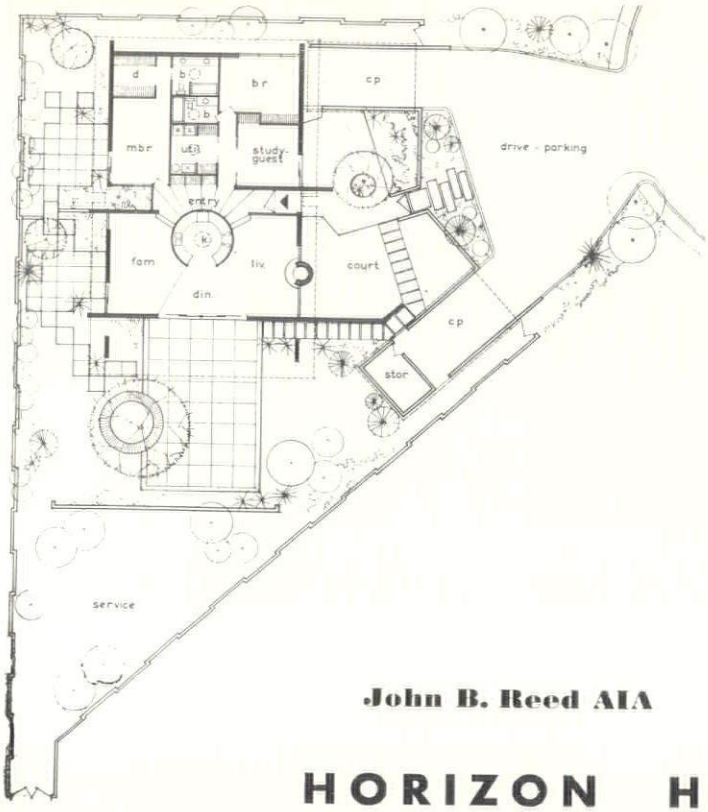

John B. Reed AIA

Albuquerque's entry in the nationwide Horizon Homes contest is now under construction at 2805 Alcazar, NE. Designed by John Reed, AIA, it will be featured in the Concrete Industries National Horizon Home competition where it will compete for awards in design, construction, and merchandising. This competition seeks to recognize builders and architects who achieve excellence in these fields.

Many innovations are incorporated in this house which demonstrate the versatility and adaptability of concrete in house construction. Exterior walls are of concrete and concrete masonry of various colors and textures. The living area is covered by a prestressed concrete roof, the car ports, by concrete cored slabs. In addition to most modern mechanical equipment within the house, the exterior planning is extensive and appropriate for the Southwest. Comprising some 18,000 square feet of living area, the house will be priced below $20,000, exclusive of land. The house, scheduled for completion by Sept. 23, will be shown in the Cavalcade of Homes.

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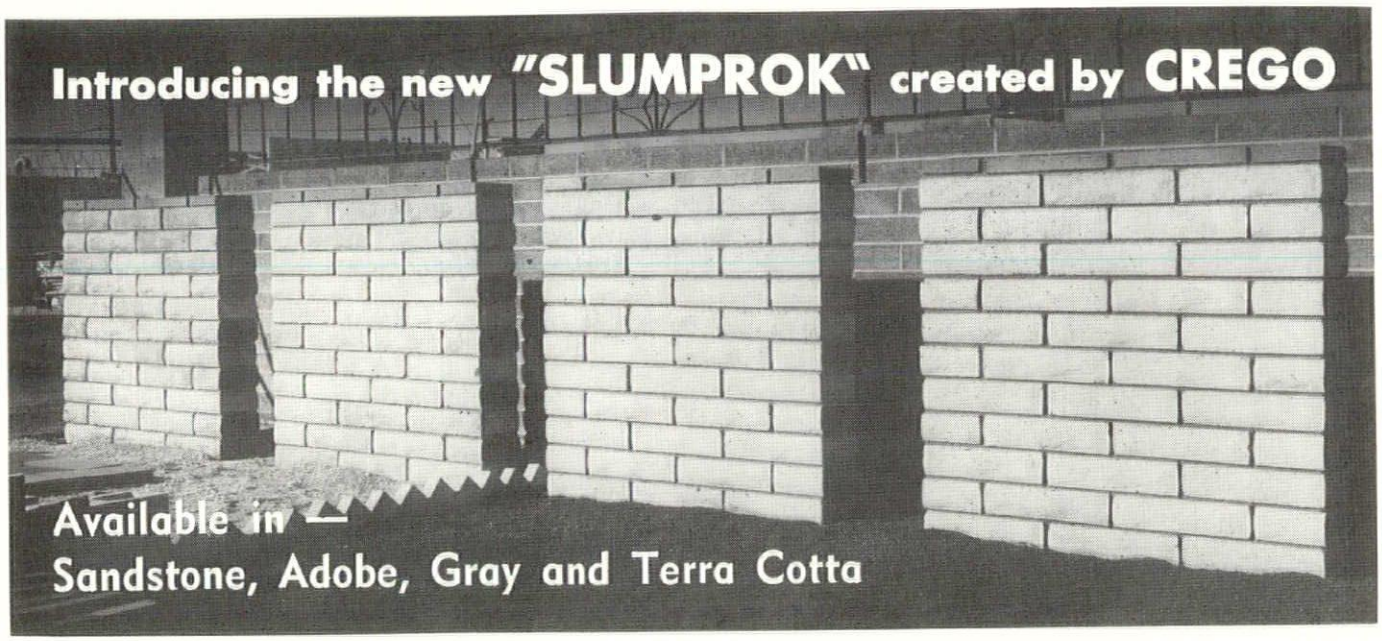

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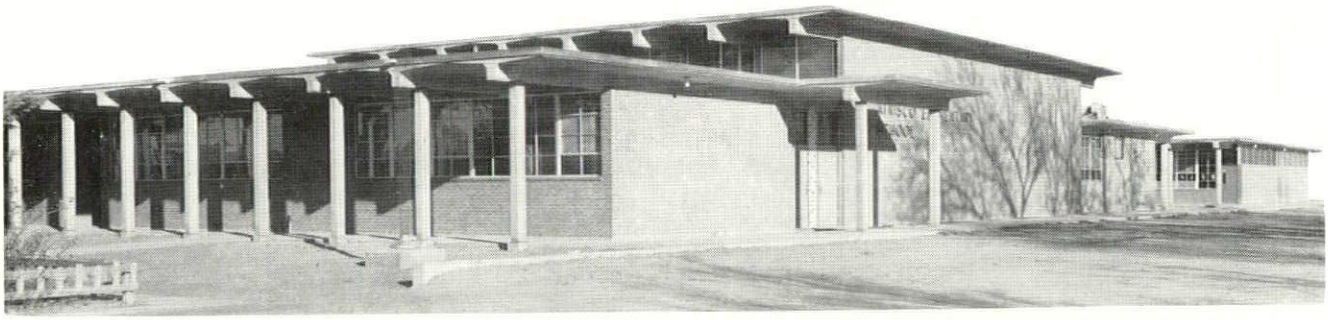

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Peter Blake, THE MASTER BUILDERS. *Alfred A. Knopf*, New York, *1960*. $6.50.

Especially during the past decades we have been exposed to a vast array of books and articles concerned with contemporary architecture. A good number of these have been written about the works of the three architects, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright, which form the subject of this book. Although one would not be hard put to mention half a dozen articles or books by or about each of these architects, one I suspect would find it difficult to recall even one study which sought to critically evaluate these three major figures of the twentieth century architectural world. A vast majority of these writings are either purely factual (thus indirectly avoiding the exercise of critical judgments) or are quite frankly of a partisan nature. Architecture, of course, is not the only human endeavor which continually hides its head in the sands to avoid unpleasant comments and evaluations, for the same unfortunately holds true in the visual arts of painting and sculpture. How welcome it is to be able to read an occasional piece by such a critic as Mumford, where one may at last experience a valid and perceptive analysis of a building or the works of an architect.

Whether this sterility of frank appraisal of our architectural scene will continue in the decade to come is difficult to say, but Mr. Blake's present study is unquestionably a step in the right direction, although it should be noted it is indeed a very cautious step. In this book the author has sought to accomplish two tasks: to tell the basic story of the lives of these three architects and to evaluate their work, both in terms of the work itself and within the broader context of the architectural world. In the first of these tasks he has succeeded very well, and it may be said that these three biographies are probably the most satisfactory and most readable now available. On the other hand his attempt to judge the works of these architects leaves much to be desired. In part this is due to his desire to remain impartial, but the author seems to confuse objective impartiality with that of simply balancing off each adverse comment with a favorable one. Not only does this present a picture which in toto is far from accurate, but after a while it becomes a down right bore to the reader. Regrettably the author also makes a number of sweeping claims and generalities concerning the essential nature of the works of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Wright, which could hardly stand up if we were to examine critically the opus of each of these designers. His categorization of Le Corbusier as the master of form, of Mies as the master of structure, and Wright as the master of space is all too reminiscent a device of Madison Avenue advertising. For, as the author himself admits, it is well nigh impossible to speak of Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp, Mies' Barcelona Pavilion or Wright's Kaufmann house at Bear Run without referring to them as a creative expression and synthesis of space, form and structure.

Even with the above reservation in mind, this reviewer would still highly recommend this book, both

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—David Gebhard

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

A teaching fellow and architectural graduate of the University of Texas in 1950, George Clayton Pearl came directly to practice in New Mexico. His knowledge of adobe derives from immediate personal experience as he has with his own hands built three houses of adobe. Mr. Pearl became chief designed and partner in the firm of Ferguson, Stevens, Mallory and Pearl in 1957. He is also the regional preservations officer of historic buildings of the AIA.

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